

Executive Summary

Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) workers, Los Alamos County residents, and visitors have all enjoyed using area trails since the earliest days of the Manhattan Project. Some recreational trails at LANL are culturally important to the neighboring Pueblos. Some LANL trails also link with trails on lands administered by other Federal agencies, the County of Los Alamos, and adjacent Pueblos. Lack of a trails policy at LANL has led to unsanctioned trails use, trespassing, and confusion regarding trails access at LANL. Some trails are listed as State cultural properties and may be eligible for National Register of Historic Places listing. Some trails traverse or are located near potential waste release sites. Some of the trails also cross the health, safety, and security buffer zones around research sites. Some trails traverse sensitive habitats for Federally listed threatened and endangered species.

At this time, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) must consider alternatives for trails management at LANL and make a decision regarding the implementation of a Trails Management Program at LANL. This programmatic environmental assessment (EA) provides decision makers and the public with an analysis of environmental impacts as required by the *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969* (NEPA). The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and NNSA must balance their Congressional mission requirements with other land use and stewardship considerations at LANL. The NNSA needs to determine the permissible public use of trails within LANL in order to facilitate the establishment of a safe, viable network of linked trails across the Pajarito Plateau that traverse land holdings of various private and government entities for recreational use and for alternate transportation purposes (such as riding bikes to and from residences and worksites). Additionally, in order to facilitate the appropriate use of trails by employees and officially invited guests at LANL, NNSA needs to determine the permissible use of trails within LANL for these users. The purpose of such action would be to provide acceptable access to trails within LANL where such use is desired and appropriate without posing a threat to DOE and NNSA mission support work at LANL or disrupting LANL operations. Public safety, operational security, and the protection of sensitive natural and cultural resources would be primary considerations in the establishment of such action at LANL.

The Proposed Action would consist of implementing a Trails Management Program at LANL to address LANL trails use by the public, LANL workers, and officially invited guests. A Trails Assessment Working Group would be established. Repair, construction, environmental protection, safety, and security measures would be formulated and implemented. End-state conditions and post-repair or post-construction assessments would be performed. The Proposed Action would have a minor effect on socioeconomics. This alternative would ideally foster a more balanced use of LANL trails while allowing some recreational use to continue. The establishment of a Trails Management Program would result in enhanced protection of cultural resources with minimal to negligible effects on the other LANL resources.

The Trails Closure Alternative would result in the closing of all existing trails to the public and LANL workers for recreational use purposes while allowing limited access by workers at LANL and officially invited guests. Similar to the Proposed Action Alternative the Trails Closure Alternative would have a minor effect on socioeconomics. There would be enhanced protection of cultural resources and minimal to negligible effects on the other LANL resources.

The No Action Alternative is presented to provide a baseline for comparative analysis as required by NEPA. Under the No Action Alternative, wildlife habitat degradation may slightly

increase but there would be no adverse effect. The possibility for damages to cultural resources would continue.

An overview of accident possibilities and probabilities associated with the three alternatives is also presented in this EA. Trail construction and use are relatively low-risk activities. Accident frequencies under the Trails Closure Alternative would be reduced compared to the Proposed Action, while the No-Action Alternative presents the highest accident risks.

Evaluation of cumulative effects for the three alternatives indicates that there would likely be only minimal and slight cumulative effects on affected resources as a consequence of the aggregate of the Proposed Action and past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions; and some positive cumulative effects to ecological and cultural resources as a consequence of the Proposed Action or the Trails Closure Alternative. The No Action Alternative could pose slightly negative cumulative effects to cultural and ecological resources and to environmental justice concerns. In conclusion, the effects of the Proposed Action, when combined with those effects of other actions would not result in cumulatively significant impacts.

Two alternatives were considered but dismissed: opening all existing trails at LANL to the public for unrestricted use would not be consistent with NNSA's primary mission; while reviewing individual trails in this EA to make specific recommendations for repair or closure was not considered to be as effective as the proposed Trails Management Plan.